

P. Cohen, Jacob  
CIA 8 House Investigat.  
Cite  
ORCA ITEX  
(orig under Cohen)  
Oswald, Lee Harvey  
CIA 8 Warren Comm.

# Perils Awaiting Kennedy Probe

By Jacob Cohen

**S**NATCHING the baton extended last spring by the provocative final report of Sen. Frank Church's Select Committee on Intelligence Operations, the House of Representatives has resolved, 285-to-65, to investigate the possibility (or is it the probability?) of conspiracies to assassinate President Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

It is not yet clear how open the new inquiry will be to the possibility that there was not a conspiracy, though remarks by Rep. Thomas N. Downing (D-Va.), chairman of the new Select Committee, suggest that he may have settled that matter in his own mind. "In the case of President Kennedy," he told the House, "I am convinced that there was a conspiracy involved. I do not know the identity of the conspirators or their motives. That should be investigated in depth."

The idea of conspiracy, of course, is notoriously vague even as a legal concept. Satisfying the common sense that something and somebody besides the perpetrators of crimes are often responsible for those crimes, the search for conspiracy also tempts the investigator into supposing that sympathy for

or benefits from a crime is itself proof of participation. In the hands of a malicious prosecutor or, say, a House Committee on Un-American Activities that search can be the occasion for considerable mischief.

Indeed, one need go no further than the Church Committee report, "The Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy," both to understand what has fired Rep. Downing's suspicions and to see the mischievous temptations awaiting the new investigation.

On its surface, that report is a model of reasonable provocation. The committee, it says, has not reviewed the question of the guilt or innocence of Lee Harvey Oswald. Nor, it adds emphatically, has the committee found any evidence of a conspiracy to kill the President. What the committee has found is new evidence which was either unavailable or deliberately withheld from the Warren Commission and from those people in the FBI and CIA who were cooperating in the investigation, evidence suggesting the presence in 1963 of powerful motives for a possible conspiracy: revenge perhaps for Mafia-related and other CIA plots to assassinate Castro; the hatred of Kennedy in certain anti-Castro circles.

Cohen, a professor of American studies at Brandeis University, is the author of "Conspiracy Fever," to be published next year by Macmillan.

Continued